

Raccoons

Raccoons are omnivorous, eating both plant and animal food. Plant food includes all types of fruits, berries, nuts, acorns, corn and other types of grain. Animal food includes crayfish, clams, fish, frogs, snails, insects, turtles and their eggs, mice, rabbits, muskrats, and the eggs and young of ground-nesting birds and waterfowl.

Contrary to popular myths, raccoons do not always wash their food before eating, although they frequently play with their food in water.

Raccoons are nocturnal. They do not truly hibernate but they do “hole up” in dens and become inactive during severe winter weather. The period of time may be for only a day or two at a time or may extend to weeks and months.

Raccoons occasionally kill poultry and will bite off the head. Caged poultry may be killed or injured by raccoons reaching through the wire cages and attempting to pull the birds back through the mesh. Eggs may be removed completely from nests or eaten on the spot with only the heavily cracked shells remaining.

Raccoons cause considerable damage to crops, particularly sweet corn. Damage is characterized by many partially eaten ears with the husks pulled back. Raccoons damage watermelons by digging a small hole in the melon and then raking out the contents with front paws.

Raccoons cause damage or nuisance problems around houses and outbuildings when they seek to gain entrance to attics or chimneys or when they raid



garbage in search of food. Uncapped chimneys make very adequate substitutes for more traditional hollow trees for use as dens, particularly in spring. Raccoons may tear off shingles or fascia boards in order to gain access to attics or wall space.

Raccoons have been identified as a major wildlife host of rabies in the United States.

There are no registered poisons for raccoons and repellents are usually ineffective. Keep garbage and dumpster lids securely closed and waste picked up on a regular basis. When camping, do not feed raccoons.



**County of San Bernardino Department of Public Health
DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
VECTOR CONTROL PROGRAM**

2355 East Fifth Street
San Bernardino, CA 92410
(909) 388-4600 • (800) 442-2283